Locomotion Conditioning

Today I am going to expose you to a concept I have been using in my training facility for many years - the locomotion conditioning routine.

Locomotion or walking is a basic natural pattern used in the world of nature by many creatures and in different forms. Some research into the neural patterns of locomotion in mammals has exposed the fact that it is largely stored inside the spinal cord and brain stem cells, which basically indicates that this pattern of movement is not learned and developed, but exists inside every creature, which suggests that we merely unveil this pattern with time.

(You can have a look at: **Neural Mechanisms Generating Locomotion In Mammals**)

This idea has broad applications in many fields, but understanding how primal and natural this type of movement is to us, may also suggest we need to make sure we are doing what we are designed to do - locomotion.

Today's routine is going to include many different kinds of locomotion, in various challenging positions - on your hands, while squatting, crawling close to the ground, with locked knees, in a wide sumo-stance, etc...

Each movement provides a different and valuable component in the workout, from mobility to strength endurance, stabilization and more.

It is not an easy workout to follow, but will provides great benefits and will be interesting and fun to experiment with. Choose the variation suitable for you, read and understand each type of 'walk' and follow my workout guidelines or create some of your own.

Now for the different 'walks'.

HANDSTAND WALK

I provided three levels here, but many others can be used. (I used over 30 different types of handstand walking in my facility over the years and rotate them from time to time)

The beginner variation is to push from a step into a short handstand hold with split legs. The split leg position will allow you to better 'feel' and adjust the balance, decrease fear of fall and control the position. Mind you, this is not gymnastics, we are using a more organic, natural position here so bending the elbows slightly, feeling the balance and having a generally more relaxed body is advisable here. (Sometimes I will require the exact opposite) Come down from the split handstand into the same foot that pushed off, take a step with the other leg forward and push off that foot into the opposite side split handstand. Repeat while advancing forward.

The intermediate variation is to walk on your hands, while providing Counter-Lateral-Movement (A term I use frequently, remember it) with the legs. If you have some handstand walking ability, choose this variation and make sure it is fluid, circular, light and comfortable. Eventually it should feel as effortless as walking on your feet. Use your leg circular motion to propel you forward and push in the correct timing your hand in the direction you are advancing to.

The Advanced variation will be a more challenging 'touch elbow to knee' with each step. It is suitable to people with more handstand control, and will require more tension and pushing off the ground to maintain balance. Mind you, this is not static balance, you shouldn’t try to balance each position while walking, but instead think of the walking itself as the element to balance. Doing so will require a different approach than static balance work, it is more about coordinating your steps than about balance - direct the position of your next step according to your current position. This is very similar to riding a bike. I often see parents teaching their child how to ride, emphasizing static balance on the bicycle. This is incorrect and produces poor results. Actually the most important thing here is to coordinate the pumping of the pedals in the correct timing - which will results in a balanced ride.

So, actually dynamically balancing a movement is not very 'balance' dependant ability.

THE DUCK WALK

This is a great conditioning movement, used in the oldschool training of many martial arts, gymnastics, dance and other disciplines. Lately it has been neglected and replaced by more static position squatting and lunging, but it still provides different benefits to the latter. Both should be practiced.

The duck walk, in order to decrease Pattela-Femoral stress in the knee should be performed like this: (there shouldn't be any pain in the knees if performed correctly, even with people with less than optimal knee biomechanics)

From a the staggered squat sit, the back foot should be on the ball of the foot, with the butt resting on the heel, or as close to it as flexibility allows. The front foot is placed flat foot in front and is used to initiate the motion. From the front flat foot - pull yourself using the hamstrings and transition into the ball of the foot, while moving the back foot into the front and landing it in the flat foot position. Repeat on the other side and synchronize the hand motion Counter-Laterally (again this term) to provide balance.

Make sure you keep the body upright, or a bit forward - directing the movement to the direction chosen.

THE BRIDGE WALK

Bridge walking is a great shoulder and lower back mobility and flexibility tool. It is used in gymnastics for many years in the warm up, and provides a combination of static-active and dynamic stretching to the whole spine and shoulders.

The easiest variation is not demonstrated, but includes... static bridge. From lying on your back, push up into a high back bridge and hold for time. This is a basic requirement before being able to walk in the bridge position.

The next variation is to walk in the back bridge position leading with the chest. The movement starts from the high back bridge, from there take one foot and insert it back, deep below your butt. At the same time take the same side hand and place it a bit in front of its original position. Now Push of the inserted leg and move the other hand even more forward than the first hand. Insert the second leg deeper than the first one and repeat the motion. This will result in a cycle of pushing with the legs the body into a bigger stretch each step - opening up the shoulders (should be done carefully and with caution) and challenging the lower back.

The butt should be contracted partially throughout this movement, use shallow breathing, and make sure you coordinate the movement - which will decrease the amount of effort used substantially compared to a bad motor pattern.

(Mind you, this is not a Counter Lateral motion, but it can be done in a counter lateral way also, only it is much more difficult. I challenge my students from time to time to do it CLateraly, you can play with it and experiment.)

A harder variation (but far from the hardest, in the future I will demonstrate much more challenging ones) is to walk backwards, leading with the knees.

The same motor patter is used, only pushing from the hands - a more difficult feat and one that opens up the front of the hips and lengthens the Ilio-psoas.

In all variations, choose medium, controllable size steps, don't rush it and rest if needed before continuing.

THE HORSE WALK

The Horse Walk is a great mobility tool for the groin. It is a very simple but not easy exercise.

Start in the low 5 step horse stance. (from a closed standing position, twist the heels out as far as you can - first step, from there twists the toes out -second step and repeat for 5 steps in total)

From there while maintaining an even butt to knee line (Optimally parallel to the floor or lower) and with a turned out hips, shift the weight towards one foot, moving your body side ways and allowing the other foot to release and move forward. Repeat the same motion on the other side and move forward again.

This should be felt in the groin, as a combination of a static and dynamic stretch, and is very useful for flexibility development of the horse stance and later on the middle split.

The development of a correct and quality horse stance is the missing component of many people's stretching regimes, when the objective is the isometric middle split, as I demonstrate in this clip:

PASSIVE FLEXIBILITY TESTS

In the future I will share my special regime for Splits and lower position development. I have yet to run into something so effective. Mind you, naturally I am a very fast twitch and inflexible person. I had to research and experiment with many stretching and mobility routines and exercises before seeing any results. I got my splits down the first time after the age of 25 and I believe I can bring anyone to such results with my methods. Stay tuned for future releases about this.

THE LIZARD WALK

The Lizard Walk is a great conditioning tool using many similar muscles as the traditional push ups, but with much greater scapular mobility & stabilization, core control and mobility of the hips and groin.

The beginner variation starts in a normal high push up position. From there take both one hand and the opposite side foot forward. The leg should be bent and placed externally rotated and on the ball of the foot. From there perform a push up. If too difficult one can lower the back knee to the floor, but not the front one.

After the push up, move the opposite hand and foot forward in the same position as in the first push up but on the other side. Repeat while advancing.

The harder variation will require that you move forward close to the ground - demanding a much greater effort to hold yourself in this disadvantaged position. The arms should be bent at the elbows at all times, and special care should be taken to keep the waist close to the ground without excessive arching and raising of the butt.

THE OSTRICH WALK

This is a great mobility tool used to promote flexibility of the posterior chain (Calves, hams, butt and lower back) and ballisticaly stretching them. (Spare me the warnings of ballistic stretching - a complete and utter bullshit from people who has little understanding of physiology)

Very simply, from a stand up position lower into a pike 'toe-touch' stretch, bounce up and while doing so move one foot forward, keeping both knees firmly locked. Pull yourself using the abs into another pike stretch and when bouncing out of it, move the other foot forward. Keep advancing forward.

If possible make sure you touch your fingers to the ground. If that is easy - the full palm. If that is easy - try the hardest and very rare 'elbows to the ground'. Breath out when going into the stretch and in when bouncing out of it.

Locomotion Workout Beginner

LOCOMOTION CONDITIONING ROUTINE BEGINNER

A1. 5 min Joint Mobility
A2. Wrist routine X 1 set
A3. Ido's Squat Clinic Routine X 1 set
A4. Shoulder ROM and Stabilization routine X 1 set

B1. Walk While Swinging Into Handstand 12 meters
B2. Duck Walk 24 meters
B3. Static High Bridge Hold for 30 seconds / Front Bridge Walking for 12 meters
B4. Horse Walk 24 meters
B5. Lizard Walk (beginner variation) 12 meters
B6. Ostrich Walk 24 meters

Rest 120 seconds after B6 and repeat 3-5 total circuits

Locomotion Workout Intermediate

LOCOMOTION CONDITIONING ROUTINE INTERMIDIATE

A1. 5 min Joint Mobility
A2. Wrist routine X 1 set
A3. Ido's Squat Clinic Routine X 1 set
A4. Shoulder ROM and Stabilization routine X 1 set

B1. Handstand Walk 12 meters
B2. Duck Walk 24 meters
B3. Front Bridge Walking for 12 meters
B4. Horse Walk 24 meters
B5. Lizard Walk (Advanced variation) 12 meters
B6. Ostrich Walk 24 meters

Rest 90 seconds after B6 and repeat 3-5 total circuits

Locomotion Workout Advanced

LOCOMOTION CONDITIONING ROUTINE ADVANCED

A1. 5 min Joint Mobility
A2. Wrist routine X 1 set
A3. Ido's Squat Clinic Routine X 1 set
A4. Shoulder ROM and Stabilization routine X 1 set

B1. Handstand Walk Elbow To Knee 15 meters
B2. Duck Walk 30 meters
B3. Back Bridge Walking for 15 meters
B4. Horse Walk 30 meters
B5. Lizard Walk (Advanced variation) 15 meters
B6. Ostrich Walk 30 meters

Rest 75 seconds after B6 and repeat 3-5 total circuits

Now go do some locomotion and let me know how it flows,
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